

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 NIC-01 /061 W
----- 012591

R 300235Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1434

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 15885

FOL SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO BIEN HOA CAN THO DANANG FM
NHA TRANG 7 DEC 74:

QUOTE NHA TRANG 743

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS VS

SUBJ: BASES OF PEOPLE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT (PACM)
SUPPORT IN MR-2

1. SUPPORT OF PACM ACTIVITIES IN MR-2 CONTINUES TO BE LIMITED. YOUNGER, MORE RADICAL PRIESTS FORM THE CORE OF PACM ACTIVISM IN MR-2, BUT THEIR FREEDOM OF ACTION IS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE RELUCTANCE OF THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY TO SPONSOR A VIGOROUS ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE. PACM ACTIVISM, MOREOVER, HAS RECEIVED LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM OTHER QUARTERS (NOTABLY, THE BUDDHISTS). ON THE POPULAR LEVEL, MINIMAL INTEREST IN THE PACM HAS BEEN MANIFESTED, ALTHOUGH, NATURALLY ENOUGH, SENTIMENT AGAINST "CORRUPTION" AS SUCH IS WIDESPREAD. AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, THIS SENTIMENT HAS BEEN MOLLIFIED BY PRESIDENT THIEU'S RECENT EFFORTS TO ROOT CORRUPTION OUT OF THE GOVT.

2. A NOTABLE EXCEPTION TO SOME OF THE GENERALIZATIONS ABOVE IS DALAT CITY, THE INTELLECTUAL FOCAL POINT OF MR-2. ACCORDING TO OUR PROV REP, LARGE AND WELL ORGANIZED PACM CHAPTERS HAVE BEEN
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ESTABLISHED IN DALAT AS WELL AS IN EACH OF TUYEN DUC'S THREE

DISTRICTS. MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE MOVEMENT NUMBER, PERHAPS, 5,000 IN THE PROVINCE AS A WHOLE. AS ELSEWHERE, THOUGH, THE DALAT/TUYEN DUC PACM IS NOT MONOLITHIC. THE PRIESTS THEMSELVES GENERALLY DIVIDE ALONG AGE LINES; THUS FAR, THE ACTIVISM OF THE YOUNGER, MORE ADVENTUROUS PRIESTS HAS BEEN CHECKED BY THEIR ELDERS WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO COUNTER-CHARGES OF CORRUPTION AND WHO NEED GVN SUPPORT FOR TAX CONCESSIONS ON CHURCH-OWNED PROPERTY AND THE LIKE. FURTHERMORE, THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE PRIESTS' ACTIVISM DIFFERS. SOME, NO DOUBT, ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEM OF CORRUPTION AND WITH BUILDING A NATIONAL CATHOLIC POLITICAL BLOC. OTHERS, HOWEVER, PARTICIPATE IN THE MOVEMENT IN ORDER TO FURTHER PERSONAL AMBITIONS UNRELATED TO THE MOVEMENT. WITHIN THE CATHOLIC LAITY ITSELF MUCH SUPPORT FOR PACM HAS BEEN EVIDENCED, BUT THERE PERSISTS A RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE IN ACTIVE POLITICAL STRUGGLE. SIMILARLY, WITHIN BUDDHISTS GROUPS, ADMIRATION FOR FATHER THANH'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS HAS GROWN OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS. YET, WHILE AN QUANG BUDDHIST LEADERS IN TYUEN DUC DECLARE THEIR SUPPORT FOR PACM "IN PRINCIPLE", THEY HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THEY WILL SUPPORT PACM ACTIVELY ONLY IF THEY BECOME CONVINCED THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AS AN INSTITUTION, FIRMLY EMBRACES IT. FINALLY, DESPITE SENATOR Y-BLING-BUON-KRONG-PANG'S ENDORSEMENT OF PACM, TUYEN DUC MONTAGNARD SUPPORT FOR FATHER THANH'S MOVEMENT APPEARS NEGLIGIBLE.

3. OTHER LOCI OF LIMITED SUPPORT FOR PACM IN MR-2 ARE PLEIKU, BINH DINH, PHU YEN, KHANH HOA, AND LAM DONG. THE PLEIKU PROVINCIAL ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT, WHICH IS CHAIRED BY A FATHER NGUYEN TRI THUC, HAS AS ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP OF ONLY APPROXIMATELY 300. IN BINH DINH AND PHU YEN SOME SUPPORT FOR PACM HAS SURFACED AMONG CATHOLIC LAYMEN AND YOUNGER CATHOLIC PRIESTS, BUT, THUS FAR, THIS PRO-PACM SENTIMENT HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY LEASHED BY QUI NHON'S BISHOP CAC. IN KHANH HOA THERE HAVE BEEN ANTI-CORRUPTION GATHERINGS, BUT THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY IN THE PERSON OF BISHOP THUAN APPEARS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PACM. IN ANY CASE, POPULAR SUPPORT FOR PACM IN KHANH HOA HAS BEEN LIMITED TO A FEW PARISH PRIESTS, SOME CATHOLIC YOUTH, AND A SMALL GROUP OF EX-MEMBERS OF THE CAN LAO. AND, IN LAM DONG, WHICH HAS A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CATHOLICS IN ITS POPULATION, THERE HAS BEEN SOME PACM ACTIVITY, BUT, AGAIN, THIS HAS BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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LIMITED BY A LACK OF INTEREST ON THE PART OF CATHOLIC LAYMEN AND OLDER PRIESTS.

4. TO REITERATE, EXCEPT IN TUYEN DUC THERE HAS BEEN A RATHER LETHARGIC RESPONSE TO PACM IN MR-2. ACCORDINGLY, AT PRESENT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT PACM IN MR-2 WILL BE ABLE TO COALESCE INTO AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PARTY. REPORTEDLY, HOWEVER, LOCAL PACM ACTIVISTS IN TUYEN DUC AND BINH DINH ARE

IN THE PROCESS OF PLANNING DEMONSTRATIONS IN COORDINATION WITH THE
NATIONAL PACM LEADERSHIP. THESE DEMONSTRATIONS MAY ASSIST
PACM EFFORTS TO BUILD A VIABLE PARTY ORGANIZATION, AT LEAST
IN THOSE PROVINCES. COOK UNQUOTE MARTIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, COMBAT OPERATIONS, POPULAR SUPPORT, SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS, RELIGIOUS GROUPS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SAIGON15885
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740376-0945
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974124/aaaaadff.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <30 DEC 2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BASES OF PEOPLE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT (PACM) SUPPORT IN MR-2
TAGS: PINT, PINS, VS, PACM, (TRAN HUU THANH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005